

# Large Jails Network Meeting Facilitates Information-Sharing

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The wish of large jail administrators to discuss common problems and issues with their peers became a reality in early June at the first meeting of the Large Jail Network. At the invitation of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Jails Division, thirty-seven administrators of large jails and jail systems gathered in Denver June 3-5 to discuss areas of correctional practice they stated as among their greatest concerns. This meeting will serve as a model for several other meetings of network members during the 1991 fiscal year,

The Large Jail Network is a group of sixty-seven administrators of jails

The meeting opened with a presentation by NIC Director M. Wayne Huggins, followed by group discussions on crowding issues, special programs, and boot camps.

and jail systems that have an average daily population of 1,000 or more inmates. The concept for the network originated when participants in "mega-jail" meetings in the early

1980s said that they would like opportunities to interact with other large jail administrators and learn what their peers were doing in their respective jurisdictions.

The NIC Jails Division first responded by initiating the *Large Jails Network Bulletin* to facilitate communication among the jail administrators. The *Bulletin* is, in part, an expansion of the mega-jail survey data published previously by Maricopa County (Arizona) Deputy Director Phillip Severson and now included annually in the *Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* is produced by the staff of the NIC Information Center and was introduced at a meeting of large jail administrators in Phoenix in April 1989.

To further facilitate administrators' interaction, in early 1990 the Jails Division polled network members regarding topics they would most like to discuss with their peers. Respondents were invited to the June meeting, and the topics mentioned most frequently became the meeting's agenda.

Administrators who said they would like to speak on those topics were invited to make brief presentations to the group.

The meeting, chaired by NIC Jails Division Chief Mike O'Toole, began with an opening presentation by NIC Director M. Wayne Huggins on current issues and initiatives that affect large jails. This was followed by panel and group discussions on four topics: a systems approach to jail crowding and population management, managing the crowded jail, special programs, and boot camps.

## NIC Director Huggins Opens Meeting

Among current initiatives affecting jails, Mr. Huggins noted that the Corrections Options Incentive Act (H.R. 4158), then in congressional hearings, would allocate \$208 million to state and local correctional agencies to develop intermediate sanctions. In addition, he outlined a new NIC initiative to establish four jail resource centers in locations around the country. Each resource center will assist jurisdictions in an area of correctional practice, including direct supervision, facilities planning, jail industries, and objective classification. NIC is also collaborating with the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance to provide money for jails to develop industries and to help local corrections agencies to procure surplus state and federal government lands.

In his remarks, Mr. Huggins commented on the significant progress local correctional facilities are making toward establishing smoke-free jails. He also strongly recommended that jails seek accreditation.

### **Topic I: Systems Approaches to Jail Crowding and Population Management**

Successful approaches to population management take into account the roles played by various groups, both within the jail and in the community at large.

- Tom Allison, director of the Orange County (Florida) Corrections Division, explained that Orange County's Inmate Management System encourages the flow of information among administrators, middle managers, and line staff. Delegation is key in this system, and staff are expected to make immediate decisions within their level of authority. Inmates, too, are given some responsibility; their behavior influences their level of confinement and, therefore, their privileges.
- Barbara Bostick, commissioner of the Baltimore City Jail, described how actors from several branches of the criminal justice system cooperated to reduce the jail's population, which had been exceeding its federally mandated cap. An important component of the effort was to release into the community up to 800 low-risk,

low-bail inmates. The mayor, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and public and private community groups all contributed to the effort to keep the jail population within its limit.

- In King County (Seattle), Washington, the jail director and the county executive convened a criminal justice committee that eventually made forty-seven recommendations for reducing jail crowding. Ray Coleman, Assistant Director of the King County Department of Adult Detention, described how a carefully conceived strategy resulted in continuing cooperation among all players in the area's criminal justice system.

Participants noted that a wide range of diversion programs are needed to keep offenders who are not a danger to the community out of jail.

However, because there are some people who should be in jail, jails will continue to be built.

Managing the jail population effectively depends on the involvement and support of all participants in the system.

### **Topic II: Managing the Crowded Jail**

Managing crowded facilities requires both reducing the number of inmates and using scarce resources within facilities as wisely as possible.

- John Simonet, director of the Denver County Jail, advocated working with police departments

and other agencies to develop standards of incarceration to help determine more objectively who should be jailed. Within the jail, Mr. Simonet suggested that increasing outdoor recreation time reduces tension by effectively doubling inmates' space.

- Extreme overcrowding frequently precipitates problems in such areas as programming, building maintenance, logistics, communications, and health care. Mark Kellar, director of the Harris County (Houston), Texas, Central Jail, described how a medical emergency brought home the need for contingency planning to handle these problems.

Participants emphasized the importance of several factors in managing crowded jails, including the following:

- Jurisdictions should control the population at the front end wherever possible, for example, by implementing intermediate sanctions.
- A proactive approach is essential. Administrators should work with judges and others in the criminal justice system to explain the jail's needs.
- Keeping a clean facility is important for disease control as well as for staff and inmate morale.
- Adding or expanding programs and activities helps diffuse stress by keeping inmates busy.

### Topic III: Special Programs

Although in the past jail administrators might have debated whether programming is necessary, today it is commonly accepted that good programming is good management. Discussions now focus on program funding and on tailoring the program to the inmate.

- David Bosman, director of the Pima County (Tucson), Arizona, Jail, noted that many programs (e.g., literacy programs, religious counseling) can be obtained free though community organizations and local, state, and federal government sources. With minimal training in security issues, volunteers can be very effective instructors in jails.
- Programs are a tool for managing the population and a means for intervening in inmates' lives. Alcohol and drug counseling programs are essential for breaking the cycle of crime. Frank Hall, director of the Santa Clara County (California) Department of Corrections, described two intensive alcohol and drug treatment programs offered within that facility. He noted that isolating programs (e.g., drug counseling, alcohol counseling, GED, prenatal education) within a single jail module reinforces program values.
- Jerry Krans, Assistant Sheriff in Orange County, California, described creative financing of jail programs through cooperation

with local school and community college districts. In one effort, jail woks became certified as vocational instructors, and the facility thus became eligible for community college funds to teach inmates culinary arts. School district funds were also used to teach inmates construction skills, which enabled them to repair and build housing.

Participants noted that a computer data bank or other means of information-sharing might enable administrators to keep up with programming ideas. Program evaluation is essential for determining which programs are most effective for specific inmate groups.

### Topic IV: Boot Camps

Like prisons, jails are beginning to offer military-style work camps to motivate selected, nonviolent inmates. Panelists reported on two existing programs and one that will open in August 1990.

- Dick Bryce, Assistant Sheriff, Ventura County (California) Sheriffs Department, described the Rose Valley Work Camp, a converted Navy Seabee camp in a remote part of the Los Padres National Forest. The camp's program combines military drills with work assignments, educational programs or substance abuse counseling, and recreation.

To be eligible for the program, inmates must be classified minimum security and must be considered nonviolent. They are allowed special privileges, such as frequent visitors and phone calls. Inmates have responded well to

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the program, taking pride in their accomplishments and saying that they see some value in staying clean and sober.

- The Orleans County (Louisiana) "About Face" program, described by Criminal Sheriff Charles Foti, is housed in barracks within the Community Correction Center in New Orleans. Although the program at first was totally military, jail administrators soon realized that education, job training, and counseling were essential for changing inmates' behavior.

Participants are sentenced, nonviolent felony offenders who are expected to stay in the program at least six months. The inmates have established good relationships with the community through neighborhood improvement projects and participation in athletic events. No inmate who has completed the program has been denied a request for parole.

- Bob Ciulik, Chief, Custody Division, Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department, reported the department's plans to open a boot camp this summer in a minimum security compound of an existing facility. The Regimented Inmate Diversion (RID) program will accommodate up to 336 men who would otherwise be sentenced to one year in jail. For the first year, the \$3.7 million needed for the program will come from drug forfeiture money.

RID will be modeled after the New York state shock incarceration program and will emphasize physical training and strict discipline. Mandatory reading instruction and job skills training, substance abuse counseling, group therapy, and work in the jail system's laundry are also program components. The program's goals are to help inmates develop self-respect by learning job and interpersonal skill and to reduce the need for more jails by reducing pretrial incarceration and recidivism.

Participants commented that boot camp staff should not include those who want to use excessive force or who have a "bad attitude." The NIC Jail Center is collecting information about jail-operated boot camps, and some jails are evaluating the camps' effectiveness, primarily through recidivism information.

## Future Directions

Based on participants' discussion, three network meetings will be scheduled in fiscal year 1991. The meetings will last one and one-half days, and several topics will be discussed in a format similar to this meeting's schedule. Network members will be asked to choose the meeting dates most convenient to them, and, ideally, each member will be able to attend one or two meetings.

The group suggested a number of topics for discussion in the following general categories:

- Large Jail Network issues;
- Media, public policy, and public relations;
- Crowding strategies (external and internal);
- Resource management and jail operation;
- Public/private sector relationships;
- Program issues, especially mental health management;
- Legal issues and liability; and
- New technologies.

Members will be asked to rank subtopics from these areas to determine which issues will be discussed at the upcoming meetings.

One of the proposed topics, the range of jails' medical costs, is currently the subject of a NIC Jails Division technical assistance grant to

Maricopa County. Regarding a second topic, Dick Bryce of Ventura County has proposed that an ad hoc working group be formed from members of the network to obtain information on food costs.

**T**he enthusiastic involvement of participants at this meeting demonstrated how the Large Jails Network can be an effective arrangement through which jail administrators can share their knowledge and experience to effectively meet their unique challenges.

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### Note:

Videotapes describing Ventura County's Rose Valley Work Camp and the Orleans County "About Face" program are available on loan from the NIC Information Center. ■